

Nzadi language

Nzadi is a Bantu language spoken in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, "from Kwamuntu to Ilebo along the north side of the Kasai River in Bandundu Province." The number of speakers of Nzadi is not known, but is estimated to be in the thousands. The Nzadi language has three dialects, *Ngiemba*, *Lensibun*, and *Ndzé Ntaa*.^[1]

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Phonology

Vowels

Nzadi contains seven contrastive vowels, which can be either long or short. The table below shows all the vowel phonemes found in the language:

	<i>front</i>	<i>central</i>	<i>back</i>
<i>high</i>	i ii		u uu
<i>high-mid</i>	e ee		o oo
<i>low-mid</i>	ɛ ɛɛ		ɔ ɔɔ
<i>low</i>		a aa	

Nzadi	
<i>Indzéé</i>	
Native to	DR Congo
Region	Kasai River
Native speakers	unknown, but probably several thousands (2011) ^[1]
Language family	Niger–Congo - Atlantic–Congo - Benue–Congo - Bantoid - Bantu (Zone B) - Boma–Dzing (B.80) - Ding Nzadi
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	nzd
Glottolog	nzad1234 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/nzad1234) ^[2]
Guthrie code	B.865 ^[3]

Person	Ondzéé
People	Andzéé
Language	Indzéé

Consonants

	labial	alveolar	palatal	velar	labiovelar
stops	p b	t d		k (g)	kp (gb)
affricates	(pf) bv	ts dz			
fricatives	f v	s z			
nasals	m	n			
liquids		l (r)			
glides			y		w

Syllable Structure

Unlike other Bantu languages, which favor polysyllabic word stems, Nzadi consists primarily of monosyllabic stems. Bisyllabic stems are also present, but they are primarily borrowings or reduplications.^[4]

Examples

- *màángǔl* 'mango'
- *pɔtpɔt* 'mud'
- *kamyô* 'car' (from French *camion* 'truck')

All stems necessarily begin with a consonant, and monosyllabic stems take four possible structures: CV, CVC, CVV, or CVVC. In the case of bisyllabic stems, both syllables begin with a consonant, and long vowels never occur in the first syllable, and rarely in the second.

Phonological Rules

As a result of the systematic shortening of word stems, Nzadi words tend to have more vowel clusters than other Bantu languages, and in many cases adjusts one or more of the adjacent vowels by the following processes.^[1]

Vowel Coalescence

When two different vowels occur in succession, one of three things can happen, depending on several factors:

	Coalescence Process		Occurs When
(i)	V ₁ deletes without affecting the length of V ₂	V ₁ + V ₂ → V ₂	V ₁ is a non-stem vowel
(ii)	V ₁ deletes with compensatory lengthening of V ₂	V ₁ + V ₂ → V ₂ V ₂	V ₁ is a stem vowel
(iii)	The two vowels can be realized without modification	V ₁ + V ₂ → V ₁ V ₂	V ₁ and V ₂ meet when two lexical words occur in sequence

[1]

Vowel Shortening

In cases in which coalescence does not occur, a long vowel followed immediately by another vowel will shorten.^[1]

Examples:

ibaa + ikwɔ = iba ikwɔ

esúú na o dzé iba ikwɔ

'the day that the man ate the banana'

ibaa + esaa = iba esaa

esúú na o dzé iba esaa

'the day that the man ate the food'

Vowel Harmony

Due to the historical word shortening from Proto-Bantu, Nzadi does not have the stem-level vowel harmony that many other Bantu languages do. However, one kind of harmony does present itself: /e-/ or /o-/ noun prefixes will harmonize to ɛ- or ɔ- if the stem has an identical /ɛ/ or /ɔ/ vowel.^[1]

Tone

Nzadi, like other Bantu languages, has two contrastive tone levels, high (H) and low (L), which can combine to form falling (HL), rising (LH), and rising-falling (LHL) contour tones.^[1]

H:	<i>nwí</i>	'bee'	<i>máán</i>	'wine'
L:	<i>bwɔ</i>	'mushroom'	<i>bvuur</i>	'load'
HL:	<i>kîť</i>	'chair'	<i>wáâr</i>	'dress!'
LH:	<i>bvǎm</i>	'theft'	<i>tàá</i>	'father'
LHL:	<i>dzǐ`</i>	'eye'	<i>mǎàn</i>	'ground'

Tone in Nzadi conveys important lexical and grammatical information, and can be the only difference between different words and forms, as seen in the minimal quintuplet here:

H:	<i>ŋkún</i>	'that very one'
L:	<i>okun</i>	'to bury, plant'
HL:	<i>ekûn</i>	'firewood'
LH:	<i>ikǔn</i>	'trunk'
LHL:	<i>kǔ`n</i>	'bury! plant!'

[1]

General Tone Rules

Tone Absorption

When a contour tone is followed by another tone that begins with the same tone level as the end of the first, the first tone is simplified by dropping the final tone level. For example, a HL contour followed by a L tone will be simplified to H.^[1]

Examples:

/mbéè/ 'friend'

mbéé mĩ 'my friend'

mbéé tàá 'the father's friend'

Contour Simplification

Contour simplification is similar to tone absorption, but occurs when adjacent tone levels are different, as seen in the following possessive constructions:

/mbwǎm okáàr/	<i>mbwǎm okáàr</i> 'the woman's nose'
/mbũn mbéè/	<i>mbun mbéè</i> 'the friend's forehead'
/ikǎŋ é ibaa/	<i>ikǎŋ ibáà</i> 'the man's spear'
/ikǎŋ é mùùr/	<i>ikǎŋ e múùr</i> 'the person's spear'

[1]

Intonation

Despite the functional load of tone in Nzadi, intonation can interact or interfere with lexical tones, particularly when a pause in the utterance is taken. In this case, a H boundary tone is inserted.^[1]

Example:

L-L	<i>mbum</i> 'fruit'	<i>mbũm, mi ó pé mwǎàn</i> 'a fruit I gave the child'
L-LH	<i>mbũm</i> 'maggot'	<i>mbũm, mi ó pé mwǎàn</i> 'a maggot I gave the child'
L-HL	<i>mpúù</i> 'rat'	<i>mpúù, mi ó pé mwǎàn</i> 'a rat I gave the child'
L-H	<i>epúú</i> 'cloth'	<i>epúú, mi ó pé mwǎàn</i> 'a cloth I gave the child'

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